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Masterpiece Gardens



News Chief photo by Sidney Gilbert

The empty trail and skyride are visible reminders of the problems Masterpiece Gardens has had.

By WALTER LAND
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Masterpiece Gardens has fallen victim to a malady that plagues many small, independently- or family-owned enterprises: it can't compete with the big conglomerates and corporations. As a result, Masterpiece Gardens is up for sale.

Since its peak years in the early 70s, the attraction, which features beautifully landscaped gardens and an inspiring mosaic replica of Leonardo DaVinci's Last Supper, has fallen on economic hard times.

Ken Curtis, owner of the Gardens since its inception in 1952, said in an interview Friday that he has mixed emotions about putting it on the auction block. His family has strong ties to the attraction. They originally owned the land on which it was built. His father personally traveled to New York to purchase the mosaic in 1951.

But since the gasoline crisis of the mid-70s, attendance has fallen off drastically. It has become increasingly difficult for Curtis to operate the Gardens without big-money corporate backing like that which is enjoyed by other attractions such as Disney World and Busch Gardens.

"It is an impossibility that it is open today," Curtis said. "Two years ago I had to let all my managerial personnel go." Since then, lower-echelon

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